

**PREQUEL TO THE
PRESENT**

**MULTILATERAL CLUBS
AND THE SECRET HISTORY OF
INTERNATIONAL
COUNTERTERRORISM
COOPERATION IN WESTERN
EUROPE, 1969-1989**

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ABSTRACT: “Counterterrorism cooperation” is a trending concept in today’s global security

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discourse. However, systematic international cooperation against transnational “terrorist threats” started almost half a century ago. This pioneering study provides an account of the historical origins and emergence of the current system of international counterterrorism cooperation in Western Europe during the 1970s and the 1980s. Based on some recently published case studies as well as a considerable number of newly declassified U.S. and UK government documents, which are analyzed here for the first time, the article gives an overview over the informal and secret institutions that formed an increasingly complex system of multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation. The author argues that the emerging multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation of the 1970s/1980s led to increased horizontal intelligence sharing – internationally between Western intelligence services and domestically between intelligence and police services – and constituted a first step to the European integration of “internal security”.

KEYWORDS: international counterterrorism cooperation, intelligence history, Club de Berne, TREVI, European integration, intelligence sharing

Introduction

When the heads of the European domestic intelligence services came together in Berlin in May 2018 for a symposium organized by the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV), the Director General of Great Britain’s MI5, Andrew Parker, declared empathically that counterterrorism cooperation between

European intelligence services was more important than ever. In the first public speech of a MI5 head abroad, Parker emphasized: “For many years we and partner services like the BfV have worked to develop and invest in strong intelligence and security partnerships across Europe: bilaterally, multilaterally and with EU institutions. In today’s uncertain world, we all need that shared strength more than ever.”²

What the head of MI5 referred to is a complex system to coordinate counterterrorism efforts in Europe and beyond that includes bilateral arrangements, European Union (EU) institutions, various international organizations as well as a number of more informal multilateral clubs. Within the structures of the EU, a major institution is the Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN), formerly also known as the EU Situation Centre (EU SITCEN). The Brussels-based body does not collect its own intelligence but relies on information provided by the services of the member states. The European Council maintains an office of the Counter-Terrorism Coordinator (CTC), which is responsible for coordinating the work of the Council in combatting terrorism³ and improving

2 MI5 Director General Andrew Parker Speech to BfV Symposium, Berlin, 14 May 2018, <https://www.mi5.gov.uk/news/director-general-andrew-parker-speech-to-bfv-symposium#sthash.azVYmWYN.dpuf> (accessed 18 May 2018).

3 The author is aware that the use of the labels “terrorist”, “terrorist organization”, “terrorist attack” etc. is problematic as there is no definition shared by a majority of scholars. For a discussion see e.g. Alex P. Schmid (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2011), 39-157. Additionally, critical terrorism scholars have made a good argument that “terrorism” is largely a social construct and that the use of the “terrorist” label serves strategic functions. For an overview see Richard Jackson, Marie Breen Smith and Jeroen Gunning (eds.), *Critical Terrorism Studies: A New Research Agenda* (London: Routledge, 2009); David Miller, Jessie Blackbourn, Helen Dexter and Rani Dhanda (eds.), *Critical*

the respective communication between the EU and third countries. Most recently, EUROPOL, the EU's law enforcement agency, opened the European Counter Terrorism Centre (ECTC), which since early 2016 functions as a platform for information sharing and operational coordination.⁴

Outside of EU institutions, multilateral cooperation has taken place in other international organizations and informal networks for which counterterrorism is not the primary purpose. Among them are the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the G7. Equally if not more important, however, are several informal multilateral clubs of intelligence and security services, for which counterterrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing is the primary *raison d'être*. These clubs, which operate largely in secrecy and without media coverage, include the Club de Berne's Counterterrorist Group (CTG), the Paris Group, the SIGINT Seniors, the Police Working Group on Terrorism (PWGOT), and the G 13+.

The CTG was created following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United

Terrorism Studies since 11 September 2001: What Has Been Learned? (New York: Routledge, 2014); Richard Jackson (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Critical Terrorism Studies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016). The use of the "terrorist" label in this article does not reflect an attribution by the author but pragmatically follows its use by the dominant discourse. This means that attacks, individuals and groups are signified as "terrorist" that were described as such by the overwhelming majority of European scholars, media outlets, politicians and security officials.

4 Robert Lackner, *Intelligence: The Missing Dimension in EU Security Policies?*, *Global View* 1 (2016), 6-8. The article was generously provided to the author by Robert Lackner

States (9/11) as an initiative of the Club de Berne, the oldest multilateral institution set up for counterterrorism cooperation, which will be discussed more detailed in this article. Composed of intelligence and police services from the EU countries, the United States, Norway, and Switzerland, the CTC focuses on common threat analyses, mainly on Islamist terrorism, and on facilitating information exchange and operational cooperation. The group, probably one of the most important in day-to-day counterterrorism cooperation, has been seeking closer connections to EU structures in the last few years, especially to Europol. Since July 2016, the Club de Berne and the CTC also maintain an operative platform in The Hague, where the domestic intelligence services of the member states run a common database and a real-time information system.⁵ The special branches of the national police forces of the EU member states and Norway cooperate within the secret Police Working Group on Terrorism (PWGOT). The group was established already in the late 1970s and will be discussed in greater detail below.

The Paris Group was set up in early 2016, as a result of increased terrorist violence on European soil following the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and especially the major attacks in Paris in January and November 2015. This club goes beyond the

⁵ Richard J. Aldrich, *Transatlantic Intelligence and Security Cooperation*, *International Affairs* 80/3 (2004), 740f; Mathieu Deflem, *Europol and the Policing of International Terrorism: Counter-Terrorism in a Global Perspective*, *Justice Quarterly* 23/3 (2006), 341; "Implementation of the Counter-terrorism Agenda Set by the European Council", Note from EU Counter-terrorism Coordinator to Delegations, Council of the European Union, Brussels, 4 November 2016, <http://statewatch.org/news/2016/nov/eu-council-CTC-implementation-a-t-strategy-13627-%20ADD-1-16.pdf> (accessed 25 May 2018).

cooperation of the domestic intelligence services and likely includes the foreign intelligence services. Its members are the intelligence coordinators from 15 European countries.⁶

Another institution set up recently in light of the challenges caused by ISIS and the war in Syria is the Group 13+ (G 13+). This Belgian-led initiative is not an inter-service group but brings together the interior ministers of several European states. Since June 2013, informal meetings are held to discuss information sharing and other common measures against the so-called foreign fighters, especially with regard to foreign terrorist fighter returnees. Apparently, the informal G 13+ has been able to give “impulses from without” for activities that were later pursued at the EU level.⁷

The most secret multilateral club is SIGINT Seniors, the counterterrorism coalition of intelligence agencies concerned with the collection of Signals Intelligence (SIGINT). This NSA-led effort has two divisions, SIGINT Seniors Europe and SIGINT Seniors Pacific. SIGINT Seniors Europe was set up in 1982 with

6 Members include Germany, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Ireland, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Great Britain, Norway, and Sweden. On the Paris Group see “Implementation of the Counter-terrorism Agenda Set by the European Council”, 4 November 2016, 24.

7 The G 13+ was originally called the EU9 Group. Members include the EU members Belgium, Denmark, Germany, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, and Poland, but also Norway and Switzerland. On the G 13+ see “Implementation of the Counter-terrorism Agenda Set by the European Council”, 4 November 2016, 38; “Gruppe der EU9, Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Andrej Hunko, Wolfgang Gehrcke, Jan Korte, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion Die Linke”, Drucksache 18/4017, Deutscher Bundestag, 18. Wahlperiode, 17 February 2015, <https://dip21.bundestag.de/dip21/btd/18/040/1804017.pdf> (accessed 25 May 2018).

a primary focus on information about the Soviet military. After 9/11, the group changed its focus to counterterrorism and was enlarged from 9 to 14 members. SIGINT Seniors Europe holds an annual conference, and focuses on targeting suspected terrorists as well as on collaboration on the development of new surveillance tools and techniques. Since 2006, it also works to exploit the Internet as part of counterterrorism. The club runs its own communication system called SIGDASYS to share copies of intercepted communications. SIGINT Seniors Pacific, formed by the NSA in 2005 with a geographical focus on the Asia-Pacific region, operates an analogue communication system called CRUSHED ICE.⁸

While this architecture has been shaped by 9/11, the major terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, and most recently the terrorist violence in Europe directed or inspired by ISIS, the current system of multilateral counterterrorism cooperation emerged already during the 1970s. This article aims to write a basic genealogy by giving a brief overview over these historical origins that constitute the “prequel to the present”. No comprehensive analysis exists so far. The present paper builds on the very few existing academic case studies on multilateral clubs,

8 The members of SIGINT Seniors Europe are the SIGINT agencies from the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, and New Zealand (Five Eyes), Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, and Sweden. The members of SIGINT Seniors Pacific are the Five Eyes plus the SIGINT agencies from South Korea, Singapore, Thailand, France, and India (as of 2013). The information on SIGINT Seniors is based on NSA documents provided by Edward Snowden and published by The Intercept. See Ryan Gallagher, *The Powerful Global Spy Alliance You Never Knew Existed*, The Intercept, 1 March 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/03/01/nsa-global-surveillance-sigint-seniors> (accessed 25 May 2018).

especially the recent works by Eva Oberloskamp on TREVI and Aviva Guttman on the Club de Berne.⁹ In addition, it is based on a considerable number of recently declassified U.S. and UK government documents, which have not been processed previously and whose analysis significantly enhances our understanding of the history of multilateral counterterrorism cooperation. However, the official documents pertaining to the subject are to a large degree still classified. As a result, some of the institutions remain rather obscure. The present article does therefore not attempt to provide a final evaluation or definite conclusions but rather wants to give the reader an introduction into the subject and the state of research with the aim to encourage further studies.

Multilateral Clubs within the System of International Counterterrorism Cooperation

The informal fora provided by multilateral clubs were imbedded as one crucial component within a complex system of international counterterrorism cooperation that emerged in the 1970s. At least as important was a web of bilateral cooperation that increasingly connected the Western European nations and the United States, as many state actors preferred bilateral over multilateral forms of counterterrorism cooperation. Western

9 Eva Oberloskamp, *Codename TREVI: Terrorismusbekämpfung und die Anfänge einer europäischen Innenpolitik in den 1970er Jahren* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017); Aviva Guttman, *Combating Terror in Europe: Euro-Israeli Counterterrorism Intelligence Cooperation in the Club de Berne (1971-1972)*, *Intelligence and National Security* 33/2 (2018), 158-175; Aviva Guttman, *The Origins of International Counterterrorism: Switzerland at the Forefront of Crisis Negotiations, Multilateral Diplomacy, and Intelligence Cooperation (1969-1977)* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 183-229.

European states also made bilateral arrangements with both Israel and Arab states. In the 1980s, bilateral cooperation even began, haltingly, extending to communist East Europe. In 1986, for example, an agreement was closed between Austria and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), in which the SFRY committed itself to share intelligence on Armenian and some Palestinian terrorists.¹⁰

A special form of bilateral cooperation were the agreements that a range of Western states, including the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), France, and Austria, concluded with the most active Middle Eastern state supporters of terrorism such as Libya, Syria, and Iran from the mid-1970s on. As part of these secret agreements, the Western European governments offered a range of “carrots” – from technical support, training, and security cooperation to economic aid, diplomatic support, and arms – in return for pledges by their Middle Eastern counterparts to curb terrorist groups under their influence, respectively to cease directing terrorist attacks on the Western countries’ soil. Sometimes these deals also included the provision of intelligence on terrorist actors by the Middle Eastern regimes.¹¹

10 “Yugoslavia: PLO Ties and Terrorism”, EURM86-20026, CIA, 3 March 1986, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 86T01017R, Box 4, Folder 350, Document No. 1-8.

11 On the French deals see “TREVI Group: Attitudes Towards Syria”, EUR M86-20154, CIA, 2 December 1986, pp. 4f, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 86T01017R, Box 5, Folder 477, Document No. 1-7; “TREVI Group: Attitudes Towards Libya”, EUR M86-20058, CIA, 22 April 1986, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 86T01017R, Box 4, Folder 382, Document No. 1-3; Jeremy Shapiro and Bénédicte Suzan, *The French Experience of Counter-terrorism, Survival: Global Politics and Strategy* 45/1 (2003), 73-75; Michel Wieviorka, *French Politics and Strategy on Terrorism*, in: Barry Rubin (ed.), *The Politics of Counterterrorism: The Ordeal of Democratic*

In an analogue fashion, some Western European state actors made secret bilateral agreements with non-state armed groups involved in terrorist violence, especially with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). For example, between the mid-1970s and the mid-1980s, the PLO supported the Austrian government's counterterrorist efforts, especially its fight against the Abu Nidal Organization (ANO).¹² In early 1979, the West German Bundeskriminalamt (BKA) initiated a significant cooperation with the PLO security service (Jihaz al-Rasd), mainly to gain information on German left-wing terrorists with links to the Middle East.¹³

States (Washington, DC: Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, 1990), 77-85. On the German deals see Oberloskamp, *Codename TREVI*, 47f. On an Austrian deal with Libya made in 1975 see Thomas Riegler, *Tage des Schreckens: Die OPEC-Geiselnahme 1975 und der moderne Terrorismus* (E-book, 2015), 234-253.

- 12 Thomas Riegler, *Im Fadenkreuz: Österreich und der Nahostterrorismus 1973 bis 1985* (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2011).
- 13 Lutz Maeke, *DDR und PLO: Die Palästinapolitik des SED-Staates* (Berlin: De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2017), 235-280; Tim Geiger, *Westliche Anti-Terrorismus-Diplomatie im Nahen Osten*, in: Johannes Hürter (ed.), *Terrorismusbekämpfung in Westeuropa: Demokratie und Sicherheit in den 1970er und 1980er Jahren* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2015), 281-285.

INTERNATIONAL COUNTER-TERRORISM COOPERATION

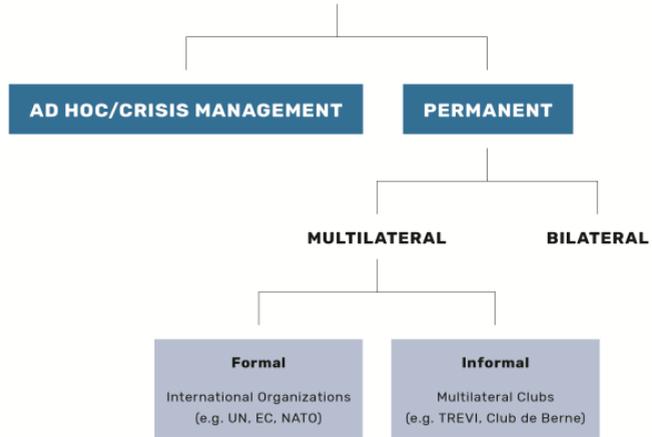


Figure 1: Types of international counterterrorism cooperation

Parallel to these forms of bilateral counterterrorism cooperation, established international organizations and political networks started to address terrorism in the course of the 1970s. The UN created an Ad Hoc Committee on International Terrorism in 1972 and adapted a few conventions. Since hijackings had been a preferred terrorist tactic of Palestinian organizations in the decade following 1968, some practical cooperation occurred within the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). But counterterrorism efforts within the UN were largely deadlocked at the time.¹⁴ The resulting marginality of the UN

¹⁴ See Bernhard Blumenau, *The United Nations and Terrorism: Germany, Multilateralism, and Antiterrorism Efforts in the 1970s* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Peter Romaniuk, *Multilateral Counter-terrorism: The Global Politics of Cooperation and Contestation* (London: Routledge, 2010), 32-63.

to enhance counterterrorism cooperation is reflected in the persistent conviction of the British Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) that the UN was “an inappropriate forum in which to promote any serious initiative, given the constant likelihood of acrimonious splits along factional lines”.¹⁵

From the mid-1970s on, the Council of Europe (CoE) also provided a forum for international counterterrorism initiatives, especially efforts in the field of judicial cooperation with the aim to enable extraditions and prosecutions of terrorist suspects. While the non-binding resolutions of the CoE at times exerted pressures on European governments to coordinate their counterterrorist efforts, the latter were for the most part reluctant to give the CoE a significant counterterrorism role. They judged the institution as too large and heterogeneous for effective cooperation and preferred informal multilateral clubs as vehicles.¹⁶

Soon after its formation in 1975, the G7 (USA, Canada, Great Britain, France, the FRG, Italy, and Japan) formed an experts' group on terrorism, the so-called Bonn Group, and adopted declarations against terrorism at their summits, such as the Bonn Economic Summit Declaration on Hijacking of 1978 and the Venice Economic Summit Declaration on the

15 “International Initiatives on Terrorism”, Memo from A.G. Thompson to Mr. Harrington, F4 Division, UK Home Office, 18 December 1984, p. 3, in: HO 325/585, UK National Archives, Kew (henceforth TNA).

16 “Western Europe: Ongoing Counterterrorist Cooperation”, EUR M87-20061, Office of European Analysis, Directorate of Intelligence, CIA, 6 May 1987, pp. 4f, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 93T00643R, Box 2, Folder 97, Document No. 1-0. On the CoE as a forum for multilateral counterterrorism cooperation see also Oberloskamp, Codename TREVI, 126-130.

Protection of Diplomats in 1980. However, G7 efforts were little specific, barely effective, and largely symbolic. Especially the European members states stepped on the brakes, since they regarded the Bonn Group as a duplication of the multilateral counterterrorism clubs, which they preferred.¹⁷

The NATO Special Committee (AC/46) provided a forum of somewhat more practical relevance for multilateral cooperation and the member states used it to share and analyze some counterterrorism intelligence. While the military alliance began producing its own assessments of terrorist groups, NATO dealings with terrorism remained limited during the 1970s/1980s.¹⁸ In the second half of the 1980s counterterrorism also became a marginal policy field within the formal structures of the European Communities (EC). This will be discussed in detail later in this article. To sum it up, the efficacy of formal international organizations as fora for counterterrorism cooperation was, for the most part, rather limited. More important within the system of counterterrorism cooperation that emerged in the 1970s was a web of informal institutions. These multilateral clubs form the object of study in the remainder of this article.

17 "Prospects for Counterterrorist Cooperation among Developed Countries", Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, NI IIM 86-10007, Director of Central Intelligence, May 1986, pp. 7f, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 90R00038R, Box 3, Folder 34, Document No. 1-5; Secret letter on multilateral and bilateral counterterrorism cooperation from the UK Home Office to St. E. Burton, MAED, FCO, 9 June 1981, in: HO 306/227, TNA.

18 Oberioskamp, Codename TREVI, 223. AC/46's dealing with terrorism in the 1970s, and the major difficulties to operate counterterrorism cooperation and intelligence sharing within this institution, are documented in numerous U.S. State Department cables, in: Central Foreign Policy Files, created, 7/1/1973-12/31/1979, documenting the period 1973?-12/31/1979, Record Group 59, U.S. National Archives II, College Park, MD.

The Club de Berne, TREVI, and the Origins of Multilateralism

The beginnings of multilateral counterterrorism cooperation were triggered by the terrorist violence that was brought to Europe by Palestinian armed groups at the turn of the 1970. Evidently, this was not first time that Western European countries were confronted with terrorist violence in the post-World War II era. In Austria and Italy, a series of terrorist attacks occurred during the 1960s as part of the conflict about South Tyrol. The Front de Libération Nationale (FLN) used terrorism as a tactic during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), while the French right-wing nationalist Organisation armée secrète (OAS) was responsible for a massive wave of terrorist violence in Algeria and France in the early 1960s. In West Germany, some Croatian exile activists turned to terrorist violence already in the early 1960s, almost a decade before the first Palestinian attacks in the country and the founding of the Red Army Faction (RAF). However, the campaign of violence by various Palestinian factions that started in the late 1960s led to a major change of perception throughout Western Europe. For the first time, terrorism was perceived as a massive and common threat. Over the following years the insight prevailed that in light of these transnationally operating terrorist actors, domestic policies and legislative measures alone did not suffice. The common threat required a common response.

The first multilateral club to be established in light of the new transnational terrorist threat was the Club de Berne, whose origins go back

to 1969.¹⁹ The Club de Berne has provided an informal forum for Western domestic intelligence services. Its early members included Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the FRG. The Club de Berne held biannual meetings of the heads of domestic intelligence services of its member states, but also organized working groups, seminars, and training courses for junior staff.²⁰ Importantly, as early as 1971, the Club de Berne set up KILOWATT, an encrypted telex system for intelligence sharing on Middle Eastern terrorism.²¹ Interestingly enough, KILOWATT was initiated by an initiative of Israeli intelligence officers in June 1971, and the system became operational in October of the same year. After a few months, it was used on a daily basis.

From the beginning, the participants of KILOWATT included not only intelligence services of the Club de Berne member states but also of the United States and Israel. During the course of the 1970s, Canada, Australia, Ireland, Sweden, Norway, Austria, and Spain joined KILOWATT as well. It was later

19 The only major academic work on the Club de Berne was conducted by the Swiss historian Aviva Guttmann. Her study has analytical weaknesses and is still based on very fragmentary access to the archival sources, but it gives a valuable first impression on the modus operandi of the club and the affiliated KILOWATT system and allows us to authoritatively establish some historical key data. See Guttmann, Club de Berne; Guttmann, *Origins of International Counterterrorism*, 183-229. If not cited otherwise, the following information on the Club de Berne is based on these accounts.

20 "Terrorism Review", 17 March 1983, GI TR 83-006, Directorate of Intelligence, CIA, p. 5, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 84-00893R, Box 1, Folder 12, Document No. 1-7.

21 Guttmann, Club de Berne, 158, even signifies it more specifically as a "threat warning system against Palestinian terrorist attacks".

complemented by MEGATON, a second telex system under the institutional roof of the Club de Berne aimed for the exchange of intelligence on terrorism.²² The very secretive Club de Berne constituted a milestone for intelligence sharing between the Western security services and significantly supported the building of mutual confidence and trust – most important ingredients in the business of sharing secrets.

The second pillar of the emerging multilateral counterterrorism architecture during the 1970s/1980s was the TREVI group.²³ Established in 1976, TREVI emerged from the bilateral Franco-German cooperation of the interior ministries that had been initiated in 1974. Its objective was the political coordination of the cooperation between the EC security services. The attack at the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972 and the perceived threat by Palestinian terrorism were the main drivers leading to the founding of TREVI, and at least during the first decade of its existence the group maintained a very strong focus on fighting terrorist violence as well as securing critical infrastructure such civil air traffic, nuclear power plants, and transports of nuclear material. In pursuit of these aims, TREVI also organized the exchange of officials, techniques, and experiences in order to enhance police cooperation, leading to a trans-governmental circulation of people and ideas.

22 "Terrorism Review", 17 March 1983, 5; Aldrich, *Transatlantic Intelligence and Security Cooperation*, 740.

23 The authoritative account on TREVI is Oberloskamp, *Codename TREVI*. If not cited otherwise, the following information on TREVI is based on this account. See also Eva Oberloskamp, *The European TREVI Conference in the 1970s: Transgovernmental Policy Coordination in the Area of Internal Security*, *Journal of European Integration History* 22/1 (2016), 29-45.

The participants in TREVI were congruent with the EC member states but the informal TREVI was operating entirely outside of the EC institutions, particularly because of the expected difficulties with ensuring confidentiality.²⁴

The EC Commission was accordingly excluded from TREVI, and strict secrecy was demanded from the participants. Already in late 1981, five years before they became members of the EC, Spain and Portugal were granted observer status. They were allowed to be present at TREVI meetings and informed about all activities of the group.



Figure 2: The emergence of multilateral counterterrorism cooperation: 1976

On the other hand, despite several efforts to receive observer status, the United States was entirely kept out of TREVI. In 1982, the TREVI

²⁴ Oberloskamp, Codename TREVI, 89.

member states reluctantly agreed that the country chairing the group (always the same country that held the EC presidency) could provide briefings on TREVI proceedings to the U.S. government.²⁵ Similar liaison relationships were apparently established in the course of the 1980s between TREVI and Canada, Australia, Austria, and Switzerland.²⁶ TREVI would eventually be integrated into the new EU structure, as part of the “third pillar” dealing with justice and home affairs, when the Maastricht Treaty came into force in November 1993.

TREVI was structured into three levels: The top level consisted of the ministers responsible for domestic security in the EC countries, who met once a year during the 1970s for decision-making. A committee of Higher Officials, which came together twice a year during the 1970s, constituted the meso level. The Higher Officials, usually department heads or directors of the security services, were responsible for preparing the meetings of the ministers and for coordinating the working groups, which constituted level 3.

The important Working Group I dealt with counterterrorism and was also responsible for

25 “Prospects for Counterterrorist Cooperation among Developed Countries”, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, 7. The thoroughness and detail of the briefings that the U.S. government received on TREVI varied depending on the country holding the presidency. The U.S. was brought somewhat closer to TREVI in 1986. Since then, the U.S. Attorney General received briefings at meetings with the TREVI Troika (consisting of the chair of the TREVI ministers, his predecessor and his successor) on the occasion of the periodical meetings held by the TREVI ministers. At the same time, TREVI also began using the “Troika mechanism” to widen its links to other European countries such as Austrian and Switzerland. See “Policies on Counter Terrorism”, Memo from M.J.A. Partridge, UK Home Office, 10 September 1986, p. 2, in: HO 325/585, TNA.

26 Oberloskamp, Codename TREVI, 125f.

intelligence sharing between the member states. This exchange of intelligence on terrorism was organized through the already existing international channels of the domestic intelligence services, based on TELEX technology, which were also used by the Club de Berne's KILOWATT system. Correspondence was codenamed "trevi". Intelligence sharing was in fact a central objective of TREVI, and until spring 1977 liaison offices were set up in the member states. The liaison offices were administered by the domestic intelligence services and run by permanent office heads, who met periodically. This system of information exchange extended the circle of actors that could participate in secret intelligence by giving police forces access to information that had traditionally been restricted to intelligence agencies.

However, intelligence sharing within TREVI did not reach the frequency, significance, and efficacy of the Club de Berne's systems. As Oberloskamp observes in regard to TREVI, the presence of officials from the ministries led to a partial withholding of sensitive information by the intelligence professionals, and important findings did not always reach the operative level of the security services.²⁷ With the liaison offices largely ignored by parts of the security authorities, the information exchange was de facto functional only to a limited extent, at least for about the first decade of its operation.

From Vienna to Quantico: The Proliferation of Multilateral Clubs

²⁷ Ibid., 135.

Soon after the establishment of TREVI, a handful of further international mechanisms emerged with the aim to enhance multilateral counterterrorism cooperation. While these clubs did not reach the importance of the Club de Berne or TREVI, they will nevertheless be briefly introduced in this section. The author of this article argues that this system of informal institutions – or, described differently, the increasing institutionalization of informality – needs to be analyzed holistically in future research efforts in order to understand the emergence of multilateral counterterrorism that took place during the 1970s and the 1980s.

Already in March 1976, the interior ministers of France, Great Britain, and the FRG established the Working Group Carlos. The working group was the result of two spectacular violent acts committed during 1975 by the Venezuelan militant Ilich Ramirez Sanchez, at the time an operative of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – Special Operations Group (PFLP-SOG) and better known as “Carlos the Jackal”.²⁸ In June 1975, Carlos had killed two officials of the French domestic intelligence service Direction de la surveillance du territoire (DST) and severely wounded a third during a confrontation at Rue Toullier in Paris. In December, the Jackal had led the commando raiding an OPEC meeting in Vienna and taking more than 60 hostages, including the oil ministers of the OPEC member states. The

28 On Carlos see the only authoritative biographical account by John Follain, *Jackal: The Complete Story of the Legendary Terrorist, Carlos the Jackal* (New York: Arcade, 1998). A well researched, although analytically weak, German-language history of Carlos and his comrades-in-arms is provided by Oliver Schröm, *Im Schatten des Schakals: Carlos und die Wegbereiter des internationalen Terrorismus* (Berlin: Links, 2002).

Working Group Carlos was staffed with two representatives from the security services of each member state, who met periodically. They were tasked to piece together and analyze information on the whereabouts, activities, and intentions of Carlos and his comrades-in-arms. In 1978, representatives of the Italian security services joined the Working Group Carlos. Since then, the group was increasingly concerned with analyzing information on transnational terrorism more generally.²⁹ A smaller and even more informal multilateral club compared to TREVI is the Club des Cinq, also known as de Club de Vienne, established in 1978 by five Alpine countries. As it had been the case with the Working Group Carlos, the occasion leading to the group's foundation was a specific, headline-grabbing terrorist incident. Immediately after the kidnapping of former Italian prime minister Aldo Moro by the Red Brigades in March 1978, the Italian interior minister met with his counterparts from Austria, Switzerland, France, Italy, and the FRG to coordinate border security measures in order to prevent that the kidnapers could bring Moro out of Italy. Like the Club de Berne and TREVI, the Club des Cinq was a multilevel institution. But while TREVI operated on the top level, the meso level, and the working level (levels 1-3), and the Club de Berne on the meso level and the working level (levels 2 and 3), the Club des Cinq operated on levels 1 and 2: in addition to the meetings of the interior ministers, a subordinate group composed of the chiefs of the five national police forces was convened semiannually.

²⁹ On the Working Group Carlos see Oberloskamp, *Codename TREVI*, 224f.

he Club des Cinq provided a forum for the exchange of particular counterterrorist information, especially on individuals suspected to support the PLO. Besides of information sharing, the club focused on enhancing police cooperation against terrorists and other criminals who would attempt to cross the Alpine countries' borders. While a considerable overlap existed with the work of TREVI, the Club des Cinq allowed to integrate the non-EC members Austria and Switzerland into the emerging continental counterterrorism structure. In fact, Austria had not been part of any multilateral club before the creation of the Club des Cinq. Another basis of legitimacy was that the small size and large homogeneity of the group enhanced its members' willingness to share and cooperate, compared to the much larger and more homogenous TREVI.³⁰

In 1979, representatives of security services from Great Britain (Metropolitan Police Special Branch), the Netherlands (Bijzondere Zaken Centrale of the Centrale Recherche Informatiedienst), the FRG (Abteilung Terrorismus of the Bundeskriminalamt), and Belgium (Gendarmerie) further set up the Police Working Group on Terrorism (PWGOT). The establishment of the group, apparently in response to the assassination of the British Ambassador to the Netherlands Sir Richard Dykes in 1976, was deemed necessary because its founding members felt that the

30 On the Club des Cinq see "Prospects for Counterterrorist Cooperation among Developed Countries", Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, 23; "Terrorism Review", 17 March 1983, 5; Didier Bigo, *Polices en réseaux: l'expérience européenne* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1996), 88f; Serge A. Bonnefoi, *Europe et sécurité intérieure: TREVI, Union européenne, Schengen* (Paris: Delmas, 1995), 162.

efforts within TREVI had not yet been leading to sufficient police cooperation on the operative level. Accordingly, the objectives of the very informal working group, which holds meetings twice a year, have been the exchange of information (on the operational level), officials (by promoting the secondment of officers), and expertise (through the organization of specialist seminars). In the mid-1990s, Peter Chalk concluded that the main value of the PWGOT had been “its role in promoting close working relationships and personal goodwill between the different national agencies involved in the fight against terrorism”.³¹ Until 2018, all EU member states as well as the Scandinavian countries joined the group, which still exists today.³²

Based on an initiative of the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Working Group Quantico was established likewise in 1979. This informal group differed from the other multilateral clubs in three central ways. First, with a membership composed of security services from Western European states, the United States, Canada, and Australia, it had a distinct transcontinental character. Second, the working group was not a European but a US-led initiative, closely tied to the U.S. State Department and its Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism. Third, reflecting its geographical composition, the Working Group Quantico focused on diaspora communities.

31 Peter Chalk, *West European Terrorism and Counter-terrorism: The Evolving Dynamic* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1996), 124.

32 On the PWGOT see John Benyon, *Policing the European Union: The Changing Basis of Cooperation on Law Enforcement*, *International Affairs* 70/3 (1994), 511f; Bigo, *Polices en réseaux*, 90; Bonnefoi, *Europe et sécurité intérieure*, 163; Chalk, *West European Terrorism*, 124; Oberloskamp, *Codename TREVI*, 225f.

Initially it dealt with terrorist violence by Croatian exiles, but like the Working Group Carlos, which had equally been set up to deal with a single terrorist threat, the sphere of Quantico was soon extended to other suspected terrorist actors, especially within the Palestinian and Armenian diasporas. Apparently, the Working Group Quantico would also be the first multilateral club to integrate Warsaw Pact states into the cooperative counterterrorism efforts that had emerged in the West since the early 1970s. The KGB began participating in certain Quantico work as early as 1986, and other Central and Eastern European countries followed suit at the end of the 1980s.³³

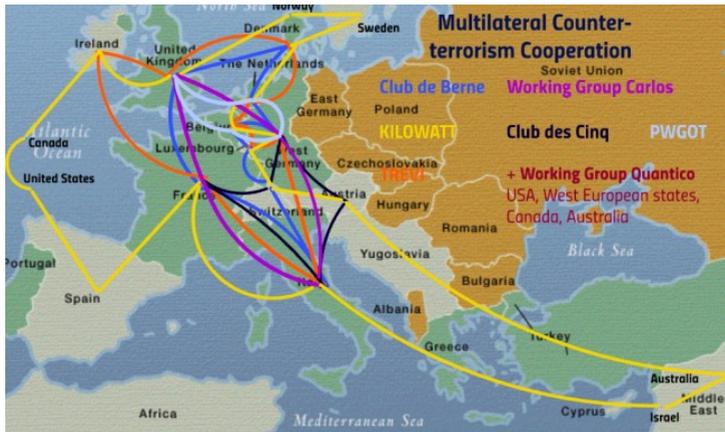


Figure 3: The emergence of multilateral counterterrorism cooperation: 1980

The 1980s: A Decade of Consolidation

³³ According to Bonnefoi, *Europe et sécurité intérieure*, 162f. On the Working Group Quantico more generally see also Bigo, *Polices en réseaux*, 89; Oberloskamp, *Codename TREV1*, 225.

The discussion in the previous sections of this article shows that an increasingly complex multi-level system of overlapping counterterrorism networks had emerged until the 1970s came to close. This informal system of multilateral cooperation linked the countries of Western Europe and extended to the North American NATO allies USA and Canada, and even to Australia and Israel. Shortly after the turn of the 1980s, the founding of the Western Mediterranean Club marked the first effort to integrate Arab states into the emerging system of multilateral counterterrorism cooperation as well. It was first proposed in 1983 by the director of the Italian military intelligence service Servizio per le Informazioni e la Sicurezza Militare (SISMI), General Nino Lugaresi, reflecting Italy's increased interest in bilateral and multilateral counterterrorism cooperation in the 1980s.

The club was set up until the end of 1983 with Spain, France, Italy, Morocco, and Tunisia as charter members. Heads of their intelligence services met annually with the objective to identify common threats especially from Palestinian and Armenian terrorists, examine state-support for violent groups by Libya, Syria, Iran, and Iraq, and to enhance cooperation on the problem posed by the harboring of terrorist actors by third countries. Besides of this inter-service cooperation, there is some evidence in the sparse source material that broader aspects of counterterrorist policy were discussed at the ministerial level.³⁴

34 It seems that the Western Mediterranean Club has so far not been discussed in the academic literature. The account in this paper is based on partly declassified U.S. intelligence documents. See especially "Spain: Basque Terrorism and Government Response", Intelligence Assessment, EUR 84-10229, Office of European Analysis,

The expansion of international counterterrorism cooperation has come in waves that corresponded to periods in which common fears of terrorism in Western Europe were particularly strong. After the first half of the 1980s had seen general stagnation and only few new initiatives, the mid-1980s were marked by efforts to intensify bilateral as well as multilateral counterterrorism cooperation, and to expand intelligence sharing. This newfound eagerness among several Western European governments fell together with an accumulation of highly publicized attacks in large EC countries and signs of increased cooperation among certain terrorist actors, especially Western European leftist groups.

The two primary multilateral institutions through which this revived interest in counterterrorism cooperation was channeled were TREVI and the Permanent Working Group on Terrorism newly founded by the EC foreign ministers. After the “initial enthusiasm” for TREVI had “waned to a worrying degree” in the first half of the 1980s, as the British Home Office recognized in May 1984,³⁵ European leaders began invigorating TREVI under the Italian presidency in 1985. A British delegate to the Higher Officials meeting held in Rome in May 1985 observed in his secret report that “senior officials now seem to be co-operating more fully

Directorate of Intelligence, CIA, November 1984, p. 14, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 85S00316R, Box 3, Folder 11, Document No. 4-3; “Prospects for Counterterrorist Cooperation among Developed Countries”, Interagency Intelligence Memorandum, 7f, 23.

35 “International Terrorism”, Memo from R.A. Harrington, F4 Division, UK Home Office, 22 May 1984, p. 4, in: HO 325/585, TNA

in the face of serious terrorist threats” and that the meeting had “made clear the growing extent of co-operation between TREVI Member States”.³⁶

In April 1986, under the impression of the United States’ bombing of Libya – the superpower’s first military strikes legitimized as a defensive act against terrorism – the TREVI ministers decided to increase the frequency of their meetings from once to twice a year and to convene extraordinary meetings if events required. Already in September 1986, such an emergency meeting was held at the request of France, which was confronted by a series of deadly terrorist attacks at the time. At this gathering, the TREVI ministers agreed to a wider exchange of intelligence on terrorist activities and decided that a communications system dedicated to antiterrorist action would be set up to link their police forces.³⁷

Parallel to TREVI but under the political leadership of the EC foreign ministers (instead of the ministers responsible for domestic security) and within the formal structures of the EC, the Permanent Working Group on Terrorism was established in 1986 within European Political Cooperation (EPC), the foreign policy coordination system of the EC

36 “TREVI Senior Officials Meeting: May 1985”, Note for the Record, M.J.A. Partridge, UK Home Office, 12 June 1985, p. 2, in: HO 325/589, TNA. At the meeting of TREVI ministers in The Hague in May 1986, the British Home Secretary noted contentedly that the work of TREVI had been shifted “into a higher gear”. See “Policies on Counter Terrorism”, Memo from M.J.A. Partridge, UK Home Office, 1.

37 “TREVI Group: Attitudes towards Syria”, EUR M86-20154, CIA, 2 December 1986, Annex “EC: Counterterrorist Cooperation”, pp. 2f, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 86T01017R, Box 5, Folder 477, Document No. 1-7.

member states.³⁸ The trigger for institutionalizing counterterrorism within EPC was a specific violent incident in London. During an anti-Gaddafi protest at the Libyan embassy on St James's Square on 17 April 1984, shots were fired out of the embassy building, killing a Metropolitan Police officer and wounding eleven Libyan demonstrators. The incident, which the British government designated as terrorism, led to an eleven-day siege of the embassy and Great Britain decided to break diplomatic relations with Libya.³⁹ The British government further reacted by launching a number of proposals to coordinate the fight against "state terrorism" within EPC, where an "ad hoc group on state-sponsored terrorism", composed of experts, was set up to discuss the British initiative in May 1984.⁴⁰ After discussion of the ad hoc group's proposals by the Political Committee and then at the foreign secretary level, the EC heads of government agreed on a set of principles to increase cooperation against international terrorism, particularly where it involved the abuse of diplomatic immunity, at

38 If not indicated otherwise, the following account of the founding of the EPC's Permanent Working Group on Terrorism is based on a summary analysis of numerous documents in HO 325/585, TNA, as well as "Terrorism: Discussion Paper", UK Home Office, undated [April/May 1984], in: HO 325/586, TNA; "Cooperation TREVI", Report from the Meeting of Senior Officials, Paris, 22 May 1984, UK Home Office, pp. 1-2, in: HO 325/587, TNA; "TREVI Group: Attitudes towards Syria", EUR M86-20154, Annex "EC: Counterterrorist Cooperation", pp. 1-3; "Western Europe: Ongoing Counterterrorist Cooperation", EUR M87-20061, Office of European Analysis, Directorate of Intelligence, CIA, 6 May 1987, pp. 3f, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 93T00643R, Box 2, Folder 97, Document No. 1-0.

39 See further Yehudit Ronen, *Libya's Conflict with Britain: Analysis of a Diplomatic Rupture*, *Middle Eastern Studies* 42/2 (2006), 271-283.

40 For a list of the proposals see "European Political Cooperation: Ad Hoc Group on State-Sponsored Terrorism", Telegram from UK Embassy Paris to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), 4 June 1984, in: HO 325/585, TNA.

the summit meeting in Dublin in December 1984.

While the St James's Square incident was the immediate trigger for this initiative against state support for terrorism through EPC, it reflected the Western discourse on terrorism of the years 1984-86, which conceptualized terrorism as essentially a "state-sponsored" phenomenon. At a seminal conference held in Washington in June 1984, U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz declared that a "league of terror" – consisting of Libya, Syria, Iran, and North Korea – controlled international terrorism and worked closely together to support and finance terrorist acts.⁴¹ In January 1986, the ad hoc committee on terrorism was replaced by the Permanent Working Group on Terrorism, which functioned as one of the regular working groups of EPC. Already in May 1986, the new working group also initiated a formal mechanism for third country contacts. This enabled for example the United States, which was barred from participation in EC groups, to develop a regularized liaison relationship.⁴² With the establishment of the EPC Working Group, counterterrorism became, for the first time, a distinct field of policy with a distinct body devoted to it within the formal institutions of the

41 George P. Shultz, *The Challenge to the Democracies*, in: Benjamin Netanyahu (ed.), *Terrorism: How the West Can Win* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), 18. On terrorism discourse during the Reagan administration more generally see Adrian Hänni, *Terrorismus als Konstrukt: Schwarze Propaganda, politische Bedrohungsängste und der Krieg gegen den Terrorismus in Reagans Amerika* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2018).

42 "TREVI Group: Attitudes towards Syria", EUR M86-20154, Annex "EC: Counterterrorist Cooperation", pp. 1-3; "Western Europe: Ongoing Counterterrorist Cooperation", EUR M87-20061, Office of European Analysis, Directorate of Intelligence, CIA, 6 May 1987, pp. 3f, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 93T00643R, Box 2, Folder 97, Document No. 1-0.

EC. In light of the impending Brexit, it is not without irony that Great Britain was the state mainly responsible for this development.

Likewise symptomatic for the mid-1980s wave expanding international cooperation against terrorism, Interpol extended its sphere of operation to counterterrorism. By its constitution, Interpol, a global organization tasked to enhance the cooperation of the national police forces that had been founded as early as 1923, was barred from cooperating on political crimes, and hence terrorist violence. In 1984, the General Assembly eventually passed a resolution resolving that crimes outside a “conflict area” against “innocent civilians” could not be considered political, and encouraging members to share anti-terrorist information. The establishment of an International Terrorist Unit in 1986 consolidated this remarkable paradigm shift, which would eventually turn Interpol into an important forum to coordinate counterterrorism strategies of European police forces.⁴³

In addition to the strengthening of TREVI, the establishment of the EPC Working Group, and Interpol’s operational extension into counterterrorism, a new informal multilateral club was set up in the mid-1980s as well. Since 1984, leaders of the French Unité de coordination de la lutte anti-terroriste (UCLAT)⁴⁴ the Belgian Groupe Interforces Anti-terroriste (GIA), and the terrorism unit of the West German BKA formed the group Tripartite. The primary objective of

43 Chalk, *West European Terrorism*, 124f.

44 “Coordination unit of the fight against terrorism”, an organization founded in 1984 and consisting of representatives from all active branches of the National Police.

this club was to analyze the links between Action directe (AD), the Red Army Faction (RAF), and the Cellules Communistes Combattantes (CCC) – leftist terrorist organizations in the three member countries – and according to Didier Bigo it became an important forum for the exchange of sensitive information on these terrorist actors, bypassing TREVI.⁴⁵

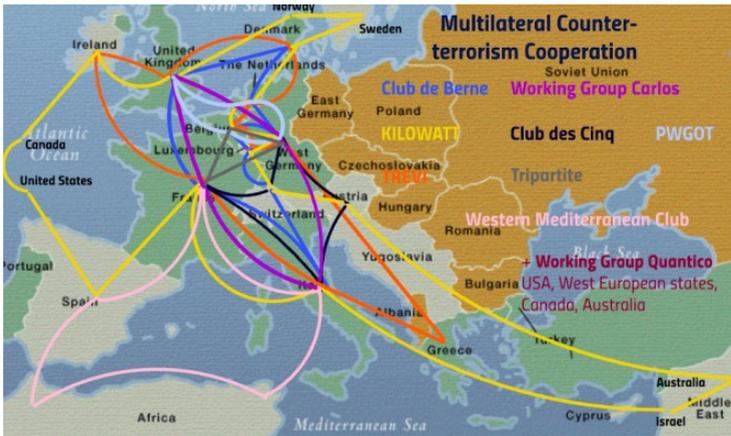


Figure 4: The emergence of multilateral counterterrorism cooperation: 1985

The establishment of Tripartite in 1984 seems to mark a temporary endpoint to the formation of ever more informal institutions. In any case, an initiative to create a functionally “global” multilateral club, launched by the Italian government the following year, failed. The ambitious proposal, which was discussed among Western European leaders, aimed to

⁴⁵ Bigo, *Polices en réseaux*, 91. See also “Terrorism Review”, 11 March 1985, GI TR 85-005, Directorate of Intelligence, CIA, pp. 9f, in: CREST, CIA General Records, 85-01095R, Box 1, Folder 25, Document No. 2-6.

create a new informal body to enhance cooperation against terrorism, crime and drugs – problems that were increasingly perceived as linked in some Western states.⁴⁶ “Security for Europe”, as this club was supposed to be named, was conceived to initially include the EC member states and combine at least TREVI, the Club des Cinq, and the Pompidou Group⁴⁷, a multilateral club set up in 1971 for the examination of drug abuse and trafficking.

The far-reaching proposal already envisaged the linking of national data banks and the joint formation of highly specialized operational cadres.⁴⁸ However, no such “super” multilateral club was set up. The next expansion and qualitative modification of international counterterrorism cooperation, and the fragmented multilateral system consisting of more than a dozen formal and informal institutions that overlapped to a considerable

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- 46 In 1986, U.S. President Ronald Reagan labeled terrorism and drugs as “twin evils”, and in the mid-1980s several European state actors shared the perception of a close link between terrorism, drug trafficking, and other forms of organized crime. See Ronald Reagan, *Written Responses to Questions Submitted by Noticias de Mexico*, 2 January 1986, in: *Public Papers of the President of the United States: Ronald Reagan, 1986*, Vol. 1, (Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1987), 3-6.
- 47 Members of the Pompidou Group (as of 1984) were Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark, Great Britain, Greece, Ireland, Sweden, Turkey, Norway, and Spain. The club consisted of two levels: (1) meetings of the ministers of foreign affairs, of the interior, of justice, of health, and of finance that took place every two years (top level/level 1); (2) permanent correspondents (working level/level 3). In 1980, the informal group was integrated into the institutional framework of the Council of Europe.
- 48 On “Security for Europe” see three documents in HO 325/589, TNA: “Italian Proposal: ‘Security for Europe’”, Undated Memo [April/May 1985], UK Home Office; “‘Security for Europe’: Plan for European Co-operation against Terrorism, Crime and Drugs”, Translation of Italian Proposal, undated [April 1985]; “Note of a Meeting between the Home Secretary and Mr. Scalfaro, Italian Minister of the Interior, on 17 April 1985”, F4 Division, UK Home Office, 8 May 1985, p. 1.

degree in their membership and in some cases also in their functionality, would occur only following the 1992 Maastricht Treaty and the establishment of the EU's third pillar.

Conclusions

It is important to put the largely informal system of multilateral counterterrorism cooperation that emerged in the 1970s/1980s, and included diplomacy as well as practical collaboration, into perspectives. Rivalries, competition, and overlapping responsibilities hampered its effectiveness. Multilateralism was restricted by different economic interests and foreign policy priorities of national state actors as well as the latter's concerns to lose sovereignty in a sensitive area, to compromise intelligence, or even to risk retaliation by terrorist groups. Nevertheless, as the CIA noted in 1983, the member services of the multilateral clubs agreed that "the integrated European security system that began to evolve during the 1970s has led to significant advances in practical cooperation on security issues, especially counterterrorism. These groups have extended the reach, supplemented the resources, and bolstered the capabilities of the member services and have made it much harder for terrorists to escape justice by fleeing across European borders."⁴⁹ Equally important, the multilateral clubs fostered trust and provided a space to build personal relationships between officials of the different national intelligence and security services. These resources built the basis for later, farther-reaching advancements in international cooperation.

49 "Terrorism Review", 17 March 1983, 5.

Counterterrorism was indeed an important driver, and provided necessary legitimation, for European cooperation in the sensitive field of domestic security, including intelligence sharing. The emerging system of international counterterrorism cooperation can thus be interpreted as a first step to the European integration of “internal security”, which had not been designed as a policy field for integration by the 1957 Treaty of Rome but would become the EU’s third pillar through the Maastricht Treaty of 1992.⁵⁰ The 1970s therefore constituted an epochal threshold: the multilateral counterterrorism cooperation that emerged during this decade provides a hinge to today. It is the prequel to the present. To give but one example: in the 2010s the SIGINT Seniors, the multilateral counterterrorism club for signals intelligence agencies, is in its essence organized like the Club de Berne in the early 1970s. Annual meetings of the heads of the member services are complemented by working group collaboration and encrypted systems to exchange intelligence on terrorism.

50 Cf. Oberloskamp, Codename TREVI, 271-279.

MULTILATERAL CLUBS IN THE 1970S/1980S

	FOUNDED	LEVEL 1 <i>Top Level</i>	LEVEL 2 <i>Meso Level</i>	LEVEL 3 <i>Working Level</i>
Club de Berne	1969/71		X	X
TREVI	1976	X	X	X
Working Group Carlos	1976			X
Club des Cinq	1978	X	X	
Police Working Group on Terrorism	1979			X
Working Group Quantico	1979			X
Western Mediterranean Club	1983	?	X	
Tripartite	1984		X	X

Figure 5: Multilateral Clubs in the 1970s/1980s

Although access to primary source material is still much restricted, a few preliminary conclusions can be drawn regarding the character of the multilateral clubs. First, these fora were informal settings, located outside of the EU/NATO institutions or any other established international organizations. This institutional quality guaranteed the secrecy that was necessary for successful international cooperation at the time. The fact that informal and largely secret institutions were the preferred settings for counterterrorism cooperation in the 1970s/1980s resulted primarily from three major historical circumstances: (1) Efforts to enhance cooperation and coordinate policies were blocked within the United Nations and other formal international institutions designed for

multilateral diplomacy and/or practical cooperation. (2) The emerging informal counterterrorism system allowed for the integration of states that were not part of NATO or the EC – whether because they pursued an approach of formal neutrality (e.g. Switzerland, Austria) or because of geographical reasons (e.g. Australia, Israel). For varying considerations, the participation of these countries was seen as important for successful international counterterrorism cooperation. (3) Several European states were concerned that close open cooperation against Middle Eastern terrorism, especially with Israel, could expose their countries to economic repercussions by Arab states and to violent attacks by terrorist actors. The “veil of secrecy” provided a solution to this dilemma. The downside of these distinct advantages of informality and secrecy was a lack of transparency and accountability. The multilateral clubs operated largely outside of democratic oversight, as opposition parties, national and European parliaments, as well as the public received little or no information on the European security integration pursued by these institutions.⁵¹

Second, the multilateral clubs were mostly “bottom-up” institutions. The Club de Berne (like KILOWATT) was an initiative directly from the intelligence services, and the respective governments were only informed after the fact. The involvement of low and mid-level professionals proved essential for the successful intelligence liaison through this club.⁵² Likewise, both agenda setting and

51 Cf. the observations of Oberloskamp, Codename TREVI, 277-279, on the problematic aspects of TREVI regarding democratic control and accountability.

52 Guttman, Club de Berne, 158f.

decision making within TREVI occurred primarily on the subordinate levels. Through their proactive initiatives, the experts in the working groups (third level) had a very far-reaching influence on the content of the decisions made by the ministers. Eva Oberloskamp therefore concludes that the formation of trans-governmental networks “below the threshold of high politics” constituted a significant strength of TREVI.⁵³

Third, the multilateral clubs led to a significant extension of “horizontal intelligence sharing” both nationally and internationally. On the national level, the emerging international counterterrorism system brought police forces access to information that had previously been restricted to intelligence services. On the international level, the counterterrorism cooperation led to a major expansion of intelligence sharing between the services in Western Europe, North America, and Israel. Before the establishment of KILOWATT in 1971, multilateral intelligence sharing in the First World had largely been restricted to the English-speaking countries, notably the “Five Eyes” SIGINT alliance (USA, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand), which goes back to the 1940s.⁵⁴ In the 1960s, the same countries further set up the compartmentalized counterintelligence alliance CAZAB, a highly classified forum to exchange information on the KGB and the GRU, mainly regarding high-level Soviet penetration.⁵⁵

53 Oberloskamp, Codename TREVI, 179.

54 On the Five Eyes see Richard J. Aldrich, *GCHQ: The Uncensored Story of Britain's Most Secret Intelligence Agency* (London: HarperPress, 2010).

55 Aldrich, *Transatlantic Intelligence and Security Cooperation*, 740.

The secret history of international counterterrorism cooperation needs to – and can eventually – be written. The recent case studies on the Club de Berne and TREVI are important first steps. However, further research needs to go beyond case studies and take on a holistic approach. I propose that future case studies as well as comprehensive analyses should research multilateral clubs as three analytically distinct categories of informal communities: (1) as policy communities, in which common policies, strategies, and approaches in regards to terrorist violence are negotiated; (2) as security communities, which implement these counterterrorism policies through the organization of practical cooperation by the intelligence and security services, including intelligence sharing; (3) as epistemic communities, in which particular conceptualizations of terrorism as a common threat and, as a consequence, specific normative viewpoints on counterterrorism are formed and mutually reinforced.

Studying multilateral clubs as epistemic communities raises questions of symbolic power⁵⁶ and politicization within these institutions. Did Israel, as Guttman asks, use the KILOWATT network to create the impression of a constant and omnipresent terrorist danger among Western European state actors in order to prevent their rapprochement with the PLO, silence further criticism of Israeli policies in the occupied territories, and give the appearance that Israel was indispensable for the security of European citizens?⁵⁷ Did the

56 As conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1992).

57 Guttman, *Club de Berne*, 170.

Reagan administration use the Working Group Quantico to spread its interpretation of international terrorism as covert warfare by socialist and radical Middle Eastern states that justified an increasingly militarized counterterrorism policy? Questions of this kind will have to be asked.

The complex system of overlapping bilateral and multilateral institutions, which this article attempted to outline, has to be studied as a whole if we want to understand how international counterterrorism emerged during the last two decades of the East-West conflict and how it evolved into the present.

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